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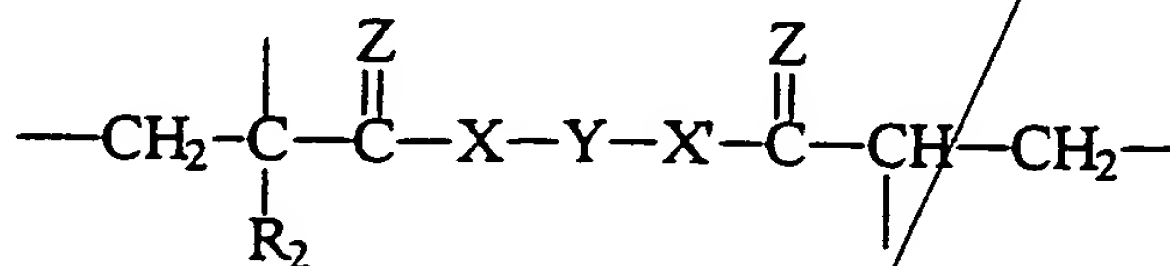
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THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A crosslinked polymer gel comprising a crosslinking moiety of the formula:



wherein X and X' are independently selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S- and -NR-, where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl,

Y is an optionally substituted non-aromatic divalent linking group,

Z is O or S; and

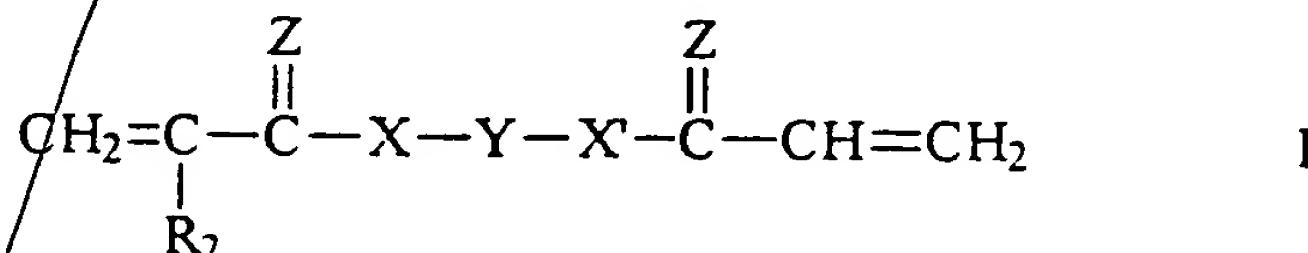
R₂ is a C₁-C₄ alkyl group,

provided that when said crosslinked polymer gel is a non-aqueous polymer gel and R₂ is CH₃ and Y is -CH₂-CH₂-, X, X' and Z are not all O.

2. A crosslinked polymer gel according to claim 1 wherein R₂ is CH₃.

3. A crosslinked polymer gel according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the crosslinked polymer gel is a polymer or copolymer of acrylamide, an acrylamide derivative and/or an acrylamide substitute and optionally one or more other comonomers.

4. A crosslinked polymer gel according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the gel is an aqueous gel comprising the product formed by crosslinking polymerisation of one or more monomers selected from compounds of the formula H₂C=CR₅-CO-NR₃R₄ where R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently selected from H or optionally substituted alkyl, and one or more crosslinking agents of the formula:



where X and X' are selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S- and -NR-, where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl,

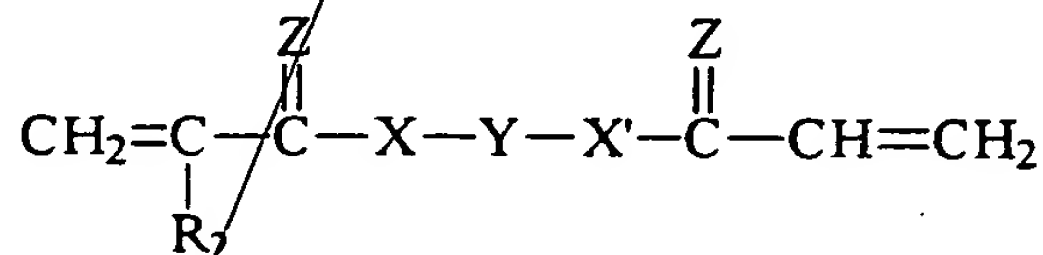
Y is an optionally substituted non aromatic divalent linking group, and Z is O or S.

5. A gel according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the divalent linking group is selected from the group alkylene, oxyalkylene, polyoxyalkylene, cycloalkylene, alkanedioyl, alkylenedisulphonyl, alkylencarbonyl, thioalkylene, ureylene, oxalyl, aminoalkylene, alkylenedisulphonyl, heterocyclyl and groups of the formula $-(R^1)_m-R^2-(R^3)_n-$, where R^1 and R^3 are selected from alkylene, cycloalkylene, heterocyclyl, oxyalkylene, polyoxyalkylene, alkylencycloalkylene and alkyleneheterocyclyl; R^2 is selected from a direct bond, -O-, -S-, -S-S-, alkylene, alkanedioyl, alkylenedioxy, alkylenedisulphonyl, -NR-, -NRC(O)O-, -NR-C(O)-NR-, -NRC(O)-, -N=N-, -NRC(O)C(O)-NR-, -C(O)-, -C(S)- and -RNNR-, where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl, m and n are 0 or 1 provided that $m + n \neq 0$.

6. A porous electrophoretic medium comprising a gel in accordance with any one of the preceding claims.

7. An electrophoretic medium according to claim 6 wherein the electrophoretic medium has a porosity gradient.

8. A method of preparing a crosslinked polymer gel, the method including the step of subjecting one or more monomers to crosslinking polymerisation with one or more crosslinking agents of formula :



wherein X and X' are independently selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S- and -NR-,

where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl,

R_2 is a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group,

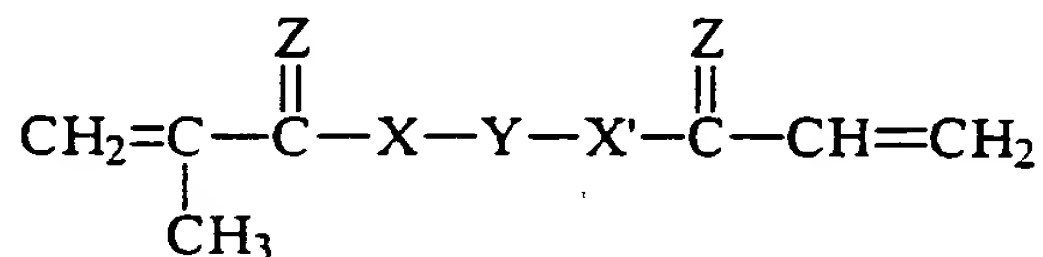
Y is an optionally substituted non aromatic divalent linking group, and Z is O or S.

9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the polymer gel is formed by crosslinking polymerisation of one or more crosslinking agents of formula I, optionally in the presence of one or more conventional crosslinking agents.

10. A method according to claims 8 or 9 wherein X and X' are the same and R₂ is CH₃.

11. A method according to any one of claims 8 to 10 wherein the crosslinked polymer gel is an aqueous gel comprising the product formed by crosslinking polymerisation in the presence of an aqueous medium of one or more monomers selected from the formula H₂C=CH-CO-NR₃R₄ wherein R₃ and R₄ are each independently H or alkyl optionally mono-substituted with OH or C(O)CH₂C(O)CH₃, optionally one or more other comonomers and one or more cross-linking agents selected from compounds of formula I.

12. A compound of formula:



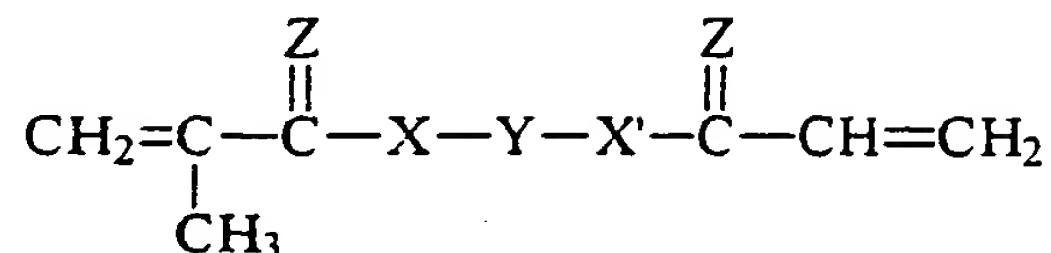
wherein X and X' are selected from -S- and -NR-, where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl, and

Y is an optionally substituted non aromatic divalent linking group, and

Z is O or S,

provided that when X and X' are both -NR-, Y is not -CH₂- and does not include a quaternary ammonium group.

13. A compound of formula :



wherein one of X and X' is -O- and the other is selected from -S- and -NR-, where R is H, alkyl or cycloalkyl, and

Y is an optionally substituted non aromatic divalent linking group, and

Z is O or S;

provided that Y is not C₁₋₅ alkylene and does not include a quaternary ammonium group, and that when the other of X and X' is -NH-, Y is not methyleneoxy -2- hydroxypropylene.

14. A polymer gel according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein the polymer gel is formed by crosslinking polymerisation of one or more compounds according to claim 12 or claim 13.

15. A method of separating molecules comprising providing a crosslinked polymer gel according to any one of claims 1 to 14, placing a sample containing the molecules to be separated onto the gel, and subjecting the gel and sample to a separation technique.

16. A method according to claim 15 wherein the separation technique is electrophoresis.

17. A method according to claim 15 or 16 wherein the sample includes a biomolecule selected from proteins, enzymes, peptides, oligo- or polynucleotides and carbohydrates.

18. A crosslinked polymer formed from one or more monomers and one or more compounds in accordance with claim 12 or claim 13.